Chapter 6 – Statewide Findings

There were responses from 36[1] Indiana counties, which is roughly 39% of the counties in the state. While we have stated that our intention was not to produce another survey on the overall capacity of Hoosier nonprofits, we did want to reach into varying areas of the state to see if, based on regions, patterns would emerge among the nonprofits that took the survey, and if that could help us to determine what kinds of assistance we, as an office, could either deliver or connect our survey respondents with in their regions. The Regional Breakdowns in Chapters 7-11 discuss those specifics.

Ch. 6.1 – Context of Poverty

Social service agencies that address issues of poverty are up to a daunting challenge, and the latest numbers available on poverty display this point. According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau report[2] on poverty (released on September 16th, 2010), the official poverty rate in 2009 was 14.3%, up from 13.2% in 2008, the highest poverty rate since 1994. This was the second statistically significant annual increase in the poverty rate since 2004. Real per capita income declined by a total of 1.2% for the total population in 2009. The median household income in 2009 was not statistically different from the 2008 median in real terms. In 2009, 43.6 million Americans were in poverty, up from 39.8 million in 2008, making it the third consecutive annual increase in the number of people in poverty. While these numbers do not tell the entire story of poverty in our country or state, they do help to display that the effectiveness of faith and community agencies that provide services to those in need is a concern for all.

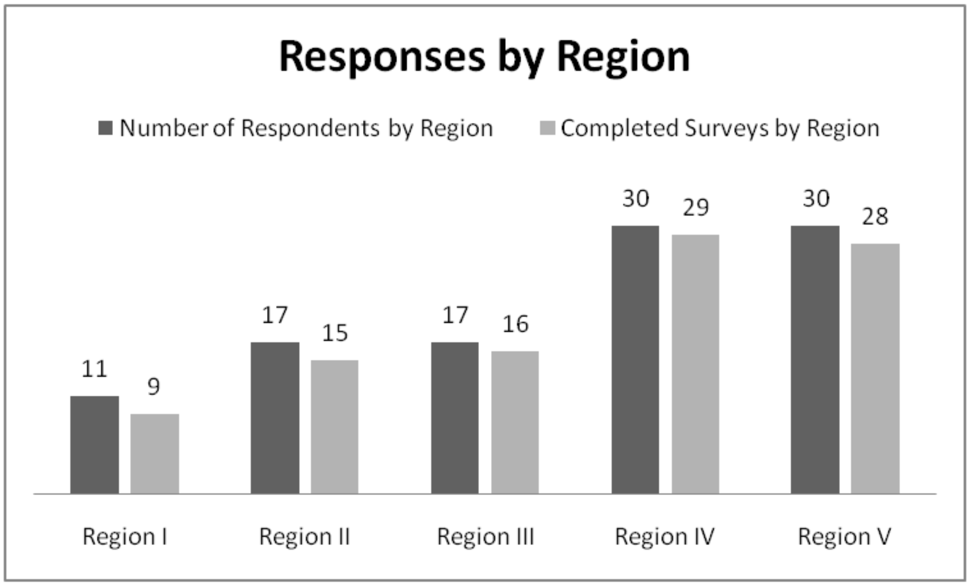
While the focus of this report is on the capacity of the social service agencies that responded by our deadline—whether faith or community-based—the overriding aim of the authors of this report, as AmeriCorps VISTAs, is to address poverty. Our purpose in producing this report is to display how we are

[1] Allen, Bartholomew, Carroll, Clark, Clay, Clinton, Daviess, Dearborn, DeKalb, Delaware, Dubois, Elkhart, Fayette, Floyd, Gibson, Grant, Harrison, Hendricks, Henry, Knox, Lake, Madison, Marion, Miami, Monroe, Parke, Perry, Porter, Randolph, Scott, Spencer, St. Joseph, Vanderburgh, Vigo, Wayne, and Whitley

[2] http://www.census.gov/prod/2010pubs/p60-238.pdf September 16th, 2010

approaching capacity building with small nonprofits. Nonprofit agencies of all backgrounds make impacts on the quality of life in communities across the country, and to increase their capacity is to assist Hoosiers in need. It is our hope that this report emphasizes that we are at our best when we work together, and that constructive criticism is only useful if it is followed by a helping hand.

Ch. 6.2 – Demographics



Graph 6.1: *Shows the number of respondents based on region.*

Graph 6.1 illustrates graphically the percentage breakdown by county of the respondent's geographical location. *Please refer to* ***Appendix A*** *for a map of the state showing the borders of each region*. As evidenced by the first graph, 11% of the completed survey responses came from Region 1, which was the smallest number of responses, with only nine completed surveys, ranging to Region 4 which represented 29% of completing, edging out Region 5 by one complete survey. This uneven distribution, as well as the low response rate to the survey itself, may be evidence of limited outreach and public knowledge of OFBCI itself, as the survey was distributed primarily via OFBCI channels. For detailed description of distribution, please see ***Appendix E, Section E3***. If our intention had been to produce a statewide picture, we would have had to greatly increase our responses. However, since our intentions were to attract possible partners for our VISTA Initiative, the number of organizations was more than adequate for the 4 Capacity Building Associates to handle in that respect.

Ch. 6.3 – Capacity Levels

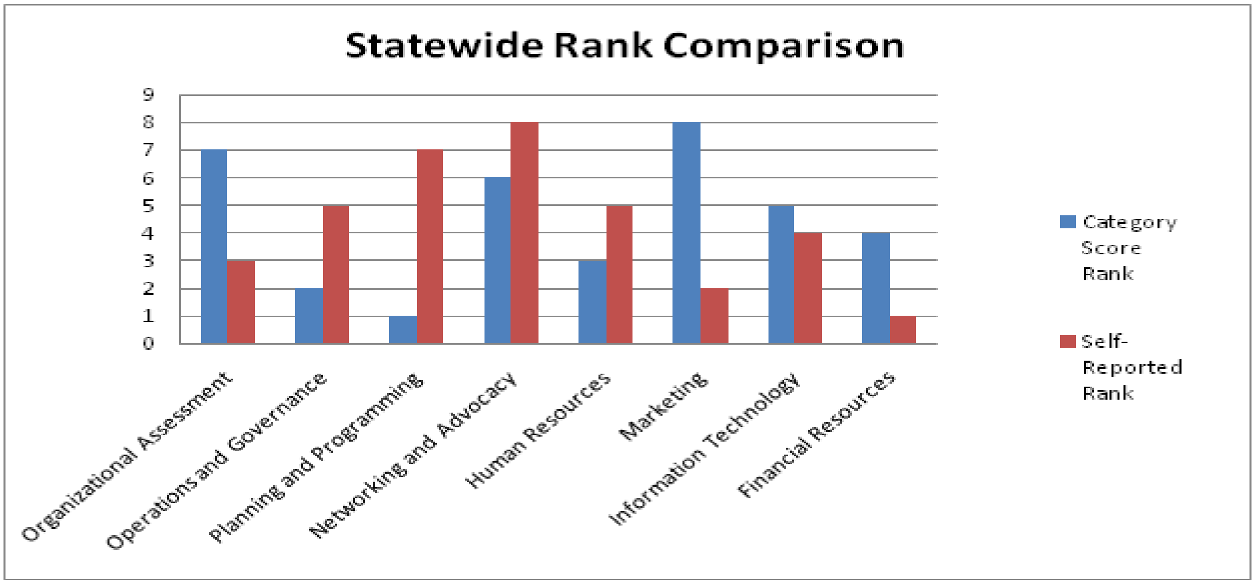
Region	Low Capacity	Mid Capacity	High Capacity	**Total**
1	0 0%	5 55.56%	4 44.44%	**9** **100%**
2	1 6.25%	6 37.50%	9 56.25%	**16** **100%**
3	0 0%	8 50%	8 50%	**16** **100%**
4	2 6.90%	14 48.28%	13 44.83%	**29** **100%**
5	2 7.14%	14 50%	12 42.86%	**28** **100%**
State	**5** **5.10%**	**47** **47.96%**	**46** **46.94%**	**98** **100%**

Graph 6.3*: Shows the regional and statewide breakdown of capacity levels for respondents based on a simple tally of their scores from their responses to the questions.*

In order to quantitatively measure the capacity of organizations, we created an equal scale based on the number of points available when the survey questions were coded. The scale is evenly divided into three levels (low, mid, and high capacity) in order to measure organizations on an individual level. Out of a total 176 points, high-capacity organizations scored at least 133, and mid-capacity organizations received a score between 89 and 132, while low-capacity organizations scored between 44 and 88 points. This was determined by considering the highest and lowest scores possible and dividing into three equal parts. As seen in Graph 6.2, only five organizations earned a score of low capacity, 47 organizations earned a score of mid capacity, and a total of 46 organizations earned a high capacity score. It does not appear that the differences in the number of respondents in each region have much of an impact because there are so few low capacity organizations.

While we certainly want to give the survey participants the benefit of the doubt, the self-reported nature of this survey could have lead to participants to exaggerate their organizations capacity to either appear stronger or perhaps even weaker, depending on the organization's desire to engage with our office or to appear a certain way. To address this issue, when analyzing individual organizations, both quantitative and qualitative data, including the staff, length of incorporation, diversity of funding, and comments helps create a more well-rounded understanding of capacity.

Ch. 6.4 – Perception of Capacity



Graph 6.4: *Shows the differences in rank between the Categorical and Self-Reported Scores for the state.*

Graph 6.4 illustrates the inconsistency in respondent's answers to the categorical questions versus the rankings that they gave each of those categories. Because the categorical scores were based on the basics of capacity in an organization, and the self-ranking was up to the individual respondents' perception, the clear differences between real and perceived capacity has to be considered. Perhaps most critical, it is important to deliberate that the nonprofits leaders who took the survey could be almost blissfully unaware of what being a high capacity organization would entail. This understanding may be harsh, but it could certainly account for some of the discrepancies. Additionally, it is possible that there was a misunderstanding in the definitions of the categorical terms, itself a commentary on the capacity of the entire nonprofit community, well-known for using ambiguous jargon or highly technical terminology. The text of the Self-Ranking question specifically called for respondents to consider their answers to the questions for each category and then rank them accordingly. However, the participants may have had a different and perhaps more inclusive idea for each category.

For example, while no specific questions referred to social media, responses to a question about methods of marketing and communication show that only some organizations market themselves through avenues like Facebook, Twitter, or others. This may have accounted for a lower self-ranking from respondents in the Marketing category depending on their usage of these platforms. Social media is an important and growing topic in nonprofit management as it is not only for young people anymore, and there is no indication that it is any kind of fad. Social media, loosely defined, includes web-based and wireless connective services used by both individuals and organizations. It is a method unlike any other form of communication, eliminating the need for proximity to create an impact. For nonprofits, this means that donors may not be located in the immediate region of the organization, and the focus changes from production of resources to engagement. Social media, as a necessity, is not just part of a marketing strategy, it is now the source of greatest potential. This, just one example, is an element of confusion in the definitions in the categories that could have skewed the perceptions of several organizations of their capacity either positively or negatively.

This idea that respondents have a different understanding of the defintions than the ones used in creating the survey is also exemplified in the Financial Resources category. Nearly every organization ranked it as their biggest challenge, and responding nonprofit leaders could have thought in the Self-Ranking section that "Financial Resources" was only about having the money to accomplish their goals. However, the categorical questions are much more inclusive than having sufficient funds in a bank account, such as accountability and effective management. On the other hand, we have to account for the diminished finances of nonprofits in recent economic times, an immediate concern for nonprofits and the reason OFBCI embarked upon this VISTA Initiative.

Capacity building and sustainability are all about connecting an organization to the best practices and local community assets that allow them to thrive on scarce resources, even when the need for their social services has increased. In that same vein, the VISTA Initiative's role is not to directly acquire more funds or perform other direct service for survey respondents, but to help connect them knowledgable individuals and intermediary training organizations that can help them launch successful efforts. The survey respondents, our target audience for this report, should take this report as a motivation piece from their colleagues in the social service sector. The suggestions, criticisms, praises, and solutions we propose in the following Regional Breakdowns come from what we've learned from Hoosier nonprofit practioners and national leaders on capacity building. We have organized this report convey to survey respondents that capacity building is not only worth their time and commitment, but that people in poverty in our state depend on the vitality and sustainability of their organizations.